DEPARTMENT OF STATE

BRIEFING PAPER

EXCISE (18)

THE UNITED STATES AND THE WORLD REFUGEE SITUATION

I. ISSUE

An effective refugee program responds to both our humanitarian instincts and U.S. national security interests. Because of the breadth and magnitude of the program and the rapidity of its growth in recent years, it represents an unprecedented management challenge to the U.S. Government as a whole, and particularly to the Department of State. The problem is global in its scope. It involves several major international organizations, dozens of countries, and millions of people.

This paper gives a brief overview of the worldwide refugee situation, states the underlying rationale for our policy, and identifies some key problem areas.

II. OVERVIEW OF THE U.S. REFUGEE PROGRAM

Ours can be called an era of refugees. There are now approximately 15 million refugees worldwide who have fled their homes as a result of war, civil unrest, persecution, and hunger:

-- Roughly 6 million are victims of war in Indochina -- boat people from Vietnam and refugees from war-ravaged Kampuchea.

-- More than 1 million Afghan refugees are estimated to be in Pakistan, their numbers swelled by the Soviet aggression against that country.

-- In Africa, the refugee population exceeds 3 million; the figure for the Middle East is roughly 2 million.

-- And closest to home, we find that more than 1 million people in the Western Hemisphere have left their homes in recent years in search of asylum from strife or oppression.

The U.S. Government has made a major commitment to assist refugees. For FY 1981 the USG will commit approximately $532 million to support refugee relief and resettlement efforts. U.S. Fiscal Year 1981 expenditures for care

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and maintenance of refugees abroad are projected at $169 million. Another $259 million will be spent in connection with bringing them to the U.S. for resettlement. We will contribute a further $104 million to international organization refugee budgets.

The most expensive part of our program, however, is the resettlement of refugees, where the U.S. has traditionally taken the lead. In addition to the State Department expenditures, other U.S. Government agencies will expend in Fiscal Year 1981 at least another billion dollars in helping refugees integrate into U.S. society. In Fiscal Year 1980 we admitted some 225,000 refugees from throughout the world. Among the refugees admitted were 168,000 from Indochina, 33,000 from the Soviet Union and 5,000 from Eastern Europe. We have also, however, increasingly become a country of first asylum, receiving 125,000 Cubans as well as thousands of Haitians.

We have no reliable statistics on other countries' total expenditures for refugees, but as of June, 1980, they had contributed some $207 million -- more than the United States -- to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) relief efforts. Several Western countries also conduct major relief and resettlement programs. Many African countries have generously used limited means in helping and settling refugees.

Examples of some of our relief programs are the following:

-- The Kampuchean effort to avert mass starvation began in October, 1979, with an intensive international food and medical relief program undertaken by the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC), the United Nations Childrens' Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Program (WFP), the UNHCR and many private voluntary agencies. Since October, 1979, the U.S. Government has committed $120 million to an overall relief effort of approximately $410 million.

-- In Somalia there are 26 camps holding 765,000 refugees in four widely separated regions of the country. Ninety percent of the refugees are women and children. The camps are managed by the Somali National Refugee Commission with increasing assistance from the UNHCR and voluntary agencies. The U.S. is the largest single donor to the program. In Fiscal Year 1980 we provided 102,521 metric tons of food valued at $26.4 million, plus $10.6 million for shipping. The European Economic Community (EEC) supplied some 31,000 metric tons.

-- The Pakistani Government and the UNHCR have provided humanitarian aid to over one million Afghan refugees. The UNHCR put out an international appeal for $100 million to

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meet refugee needs. The U.S., Japan, and a number of other countries responded. We provided, in Fiscal Year 1980, $39 million worth of food commodities, $7.5 million in cash and kind and $2.3 million worth of rupees for local purchases.

All of the relief programs depend heavily on international organizations such as the UNHCR, the ICRC, and the Intergovernmental Committee for Migration (ICM). These organizations provide personnel, coordination and management for the relief operations of voluntary agencies on the ground. However, they often have difficulty operating in areas of limited local infrastructure.

Beyond meeting immediate needs through relief efforts, our program focuses on longer term solutions based on voluntary repatriation, resettlement in place and, as a last resort, resettlement in third countries, including the United States. Most resettlement takes place quietly, without the publicity generated by the original flows. Approximately 200,000 Nicaraguan refugees were able to return after the change in government. Hundreds of thousands resettled in Zimbabwe after the end of the civil war. Some 500,000 Indochinese refugees have settled in countries other than the U.S.

III. POLICY RATIONALE

Traditionally, the U.S. refugee program has been one where our humanitarian interests clearly predominated. We have been able, first and foremost, to make such massive commitments to assist refugees because of the interest and support of the American public in helping others in great need. By focusing on humanitarian needs, we have involved other countries and international organizations to the point that they contribute two-thirds of the global refugee program. Of increasing -- and at times paramount -- importance has been the relationship of our refugee programs to our national security interest.

The success of our humanitarian efforts in turn often bears upon our national security interests. The large-scale influx of refugees can destabilize areas of strategic concern to the United States. Our ability -- and that of the interational community -- to reduce the burden placed by the refugees on the host country through the provision of relief and the support of refugee resettlement and repatriation programs can significantly mitigate the disruptive impact of the refugees on a country's economy and social structure. However, the most destabilizing facet of refugee flows is the potential which the movement of refugees has for spreading conflict across borders. Consider the following:

-- Over the last year, as many as 500,000 Kampucheans fled to the Thai-Kampuchean border area, some of whom were members of Democratic Kampuchea forces (Pol Pot) or other insurgent groups carrying on guerrilla warfare against the Vietnamese. Large numbers of refugees and insurgents crossed into Thailand for safehaven; the presence of insurgents in the border area proved to be a provocation for the Vietnamese who on several occasions -- notably in June 1980 -- made incursions into Thai territory.

-- Since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, 1.25 million Afghan refugees have fled into Pakistan's North West Frontier Province and Baluchistan. The refugees, members of a tribe spanning both sides of the border, hold the potential for stirring up nationalistic fervor in both areas. Of more immediate concern is that the Soviets perceive the presence of the refugees and the assistance provided to them as a perpetuation of the rebels' efforts. Concerned that refugee camps are being used as staging areas for forays into Afghanistan, the Soviets have reportedly attacked refugee camps in Pakistan.

-- More than 1.2 million refugees have fled to Somalia from Ethiopia during the past two years. Ethiopian forces have reportedly attacked a refugee camp in Somalia. The presence of the refugees and the fighting with Ethiopia have placed a tremendous strain on Somalia. A collapse in Somalia and return of Soviet influence over that country would damage our position on the Horn of Africa, particularly as it relates to access to the strategically located naval bases in Somalia.

In addition to refugees impacting on our overseas national security interests, individuals fleeing directly to our country, as witnessed most recently by the large-scale influx of Cubans, pose some very serious domestic problems for our country. The recent Cuban boat flow has presented Southern Florida with major security and economic problems. The national disenchantment with the behavior of the Cubans and with the perception that Castro "dumped" the Cubans, many of whom were released from jails or prisons, on our shores has in turn damaged public support of the overall refugee program. Should a "Cuban" backlash result in reduction in funds appropriated for refugee assistance or in numbers of refugees to be admitted to our nation, our ability to meet those overseas humanitarian and national security interests relating to refugees could be impaired.

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IV. PROBLEM AREAS

This background creates several areas of policy concerns and problems.

1. Refugee problems are increasingly long-term, and require not just immediate relief but long-term effort. This may include development assistance to the countries from which the refugees fled (if repatriation is possible), to which they fled or countries of ultimate resettlement.

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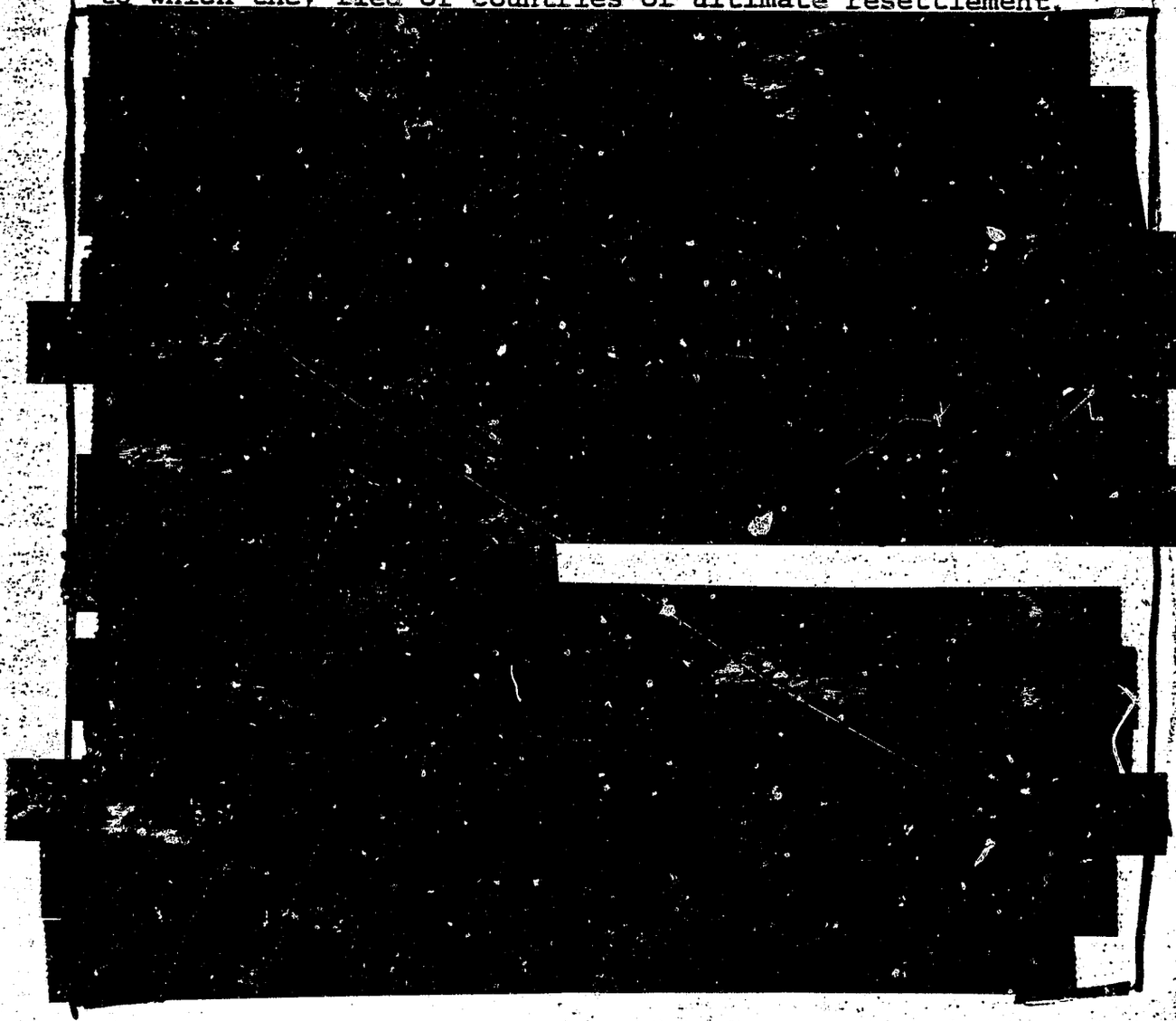

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OUS TO REGION AND WHICH ARE HIGHLY TOXIC TO MAN AND ANIMALS," HAIG SAID. HE DID NOT SPECIFICALLY ACCUSE SOVIET UNION OF HAVING USED CHEMICAL WEAPONS, ALTHOUGH IMPLICATION SEEMED CLEAR, REUTER NOTED. "TOMORROW (MONDAY) IN MY CAPITAL, U.S. WILL HAVE MORE TO SAY ON THIS SUBJECT," HAIG STATED. U.S. WAS TAKING STEPS TO SEE THAT EVIDENCE WAS PRESENTED TO SECRETARY GENERAL WALDHEIM AND TO GROUP OF EXPERTS INVESTIGATING ISSUE UNDER HIS AUSPICES, HAIG SAID. WASHINGTON POST, IN REUTER DISPATCH, REPORTED THAT TASS DESCRIBED HAIG'S CHARGES AS MONSTROUS AND SLANDEROUS. HAIG'S SUGGESTION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS USE WAS "UNFOUNDED AND FALSE," TASS SAID. "IN ENTIRE HISTORY OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, NO STATE HAS USED CHEMICAL WEAPONS AS WIDELY AS U.S.," TASS SAID.

2. GEORGE C. WILSON OF WASHINGTON POST REPORTED REAGAN HAS

DECIDED TO TRIM DEFENSE INCREASES BY $13 BILLION, AND "JUBILANT" PENTAGON OFFICIALS SAID CUTS WILL ONLY SLOW DOWN, NOT DERAIL, PRESIDENT'S HIGH SPEED REARMAMENT EFFORT. ACCORDING TO WILSON, PENTAGON OFFICIALS EXPLAINED THEIR REASONS FOR BEING SO UPBEAT ABOUT REAGAN DECISION BY SAYING IT LEAVES UNSCATHED HUGE INCREASES ADMINISTRATION MADE IN CARTER'S FISCAL 1980 AND 1981 BUDGET. OFFICIALS ADDED, SA WILSON, MOST OF $13 BILLION REAGAN WANTS TO CUT FROM PENT-AGON SPENDING CAN BE ABSORBED BY SLOWING PLANNED INCREASE IN ARMY STRENGTH AND STOCKPILING OF AMMUNITION ABROAD; RETIRING SOME NAVY SHIPS EARLIER AND POSTPONING CONSTRUCTION OF ABOUT 10 OF THEM PLANNED FOR NEXT FIVE YEARS, AND REDUC-ING VOLUME OF AIRCRAFT PURCHASES FOR NEXT FEW YEARS.

3. EDWARD COWAN OF N.Y. TIMES REPORTED SENATE BUDGET COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN DOMENICI SAID "MAJORITY OF MY COMMITTEE AND MAJORITY OF CONGRESS ARE LOOKING FOR LARGER (DEFENSE CUTS) THAN THAT." DOMENICI ADDED, "MILITARY WILL HAVE TO PRESENT THEIR FIVE YEAR PLAN IN DETAIL. THEY HAVE NOT DONE THAT TO THIS POINT. IF THEY ARE CONVINCING THEY WILL GET THEIR WAY. IF NOT, I BELIEVE THERE WILL BE ADDITIONAL CUTS REQUIRED." COWAN ALSO REPORTED HOUSE BUDGET COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN JONES SAID REAGAN'S 13BILLION REDUCTION "IS ALMOST EXACTLY" WHAT HIS COMMITTEE PROPOSED LAST SPRING, BUT PRESIDENT SAID THEN "THAT IT WOULD JEOPARDIZE OUR SECURITY." ACCORDING TOCOWAN HOWEVER, REAGAN RESPONDED TO COMMENTS OF DOMENICI AND JONES BY SAYING "WE'VE BEEN CUTTI THE BUDGET THAT HAS BEEN OVERGROWN AND EXTRAVAGANT OVER YEARS WHILE IN SAME YEARS, DEFENSE HAS BEEN A POOR RELATIVE."

4. MAJOR DAILIES REPORTED HAIG'S SPEECH IN WEST BERLIN. REUTER DISPATCH IN N.Y. TIMES NOTED HAIG'S SPEECH "EXPRESSING PHILOSOPHIC DEFENSE OF WESTERN VALUES IN WORDS OF HIS AIDES,COINCIDEDWITH OPENING OF NATO WAR GAMES IN EUROPE, INVOLVIG 200,000 TO 300,000 MEN IN 28 EXERCISES

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SUBJECT: THE UNITED STATES AND THE WORLD REFUGEE SITUATION

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